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THE
Pastor's Power,
AND THE
People's Obedience,
Briefly stated and defended,
IN A
SERMON

Preached before the
Synod of DUMFRIES,
October 13th, 1730.

By Mr. JOHN SCOTT Minister of the Gospel at
Holywood.

Published at the Request of some who heard it.



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By JOHN SCOTT, Minister of the Gospel at
 St. Andrew's Church, London.
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PREFACE.

THE Desire of several judicious Ministers who heard this Sermon, together with some other Motives needless to be mentioned here, determined me to print it; without further Apology for the Presumption of exposing to publick View, a naked Discourse, whose chief Particulars, as well as the whole Form of managing them, are liable to considerable Difficulties.

THE Author of The Rights of the Christian Church asserted (who, under Pretence of opposing the Encroachments of Popery and Church Power, has laboured at once to set aside all Christian Ordinances, and the very Being of a Christian Ministry, and a Christian Church;) is the famous Latitudinarian Writer, whose Reasonings, tho' not particularly cited, are chiefly aimed at in this Discourse: Which will be therefore best understood by those who have read that Book. And tho' I am far from thinking this small Performance an equal Answer thereto; yet, if I am not mistaken, the Office and Power of Church-men, whether as single Pastors, or united in Judicatories, are here so carefully stated and guarded, as will stand the Shock of that Formidable Ad-

versary better, than some of those Tory-Schemes of Church Power, which have appeared against him with more Raillery than Reason. And the Discourse, such as it is, may possibly help some private Persons to a short and easy View of Church-Power, and to a better Sense of their Duty towards their Spiritual Guides and Rulers in Ecclesiastical Matters.

As the chief Design of this Discourse is to establish a moderate Church Power, consistent with private Judgment, and independent of the civil Magistrate, (which more than Forty Years uninterrupted Experience hath proven to be very practicable, and safe for both Church and State, in this Nation;) so by a plain Consequence, or native Inference from it, a good Answer may be made to those, who cry out against the present Ministers, as impairing, if not denying, the Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church. We meet, constitute, pass Sentence, and do every other Thing competent for us in the Name of Jesus, and, to the best of our Skill, according to the Rules laid down by him: And if this be not to acknowledge his Kingship or Headship in a very practical Manner, I would gladly know what they mean by it. Some who make the greatest Noise about this Affair, seem to understand it least; they have unhappily annexed to the Kingship of Jesus, which is altogether of a spiritual Nature, some foreign Ideas of worldly Power and Policy, taken from the Kingdoms of this Earth, and then complain of us, because we act not agreeably to their Notions: But most unjustly. 'Tis true, we

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reform not some Things in the State of which they complain; because we have no Power to meddle with them; for in Civil Matters or State Affairs, Christ hath given us none, unless it be to put the Magistrate in Mind of his Duty, to act agreeably to the Law of God, when Providence calls us to it.

WE are not for using Force in extirpating those who differ from us; because Christ hath told us, His Kingdom is not of this World, and therefore not to be propagated by Fire and Sword, or the like violent Methods. And as Persecution for Conscience-Sake is not our Doctrine, so it should never be our Temper. Ministers may doubtless defend their just Rights and Privileges, like other Subjects; they may call in the Magistrates Aid, when necessary to prevent open and violent Intrusion made upon them, by the declared Enemies of both Church and State. But Church-men as such have no Power of the Sword; they have no Power of inflicting carnal Severities upon those who differ from them, and they should not desire the civil Magistrate to do it merely on that Account.

THE Variety of Particulars necessarily crowded into this Sermon, in order to place the Subject thereof in a competent Light, hath rendred both the Style and Reasoning more rough and perplexed, than will be agreeable to a delicate Taste, and hath doubtless occasioned greater Faults of another Nature, which cannot escape the judicious Reader: But I hope he will have the Goodness to forgive them, and encourage the first printed Sermon of a young Preacher, whose
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sincere Desire is, that Pastors and People may equally enjoy their respective Rights! That divine Government and sacred Liberty may equally flourish! And that Peace and Truth may be the Blessings of this Church to latest Posterity! Amen.



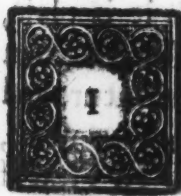
Errata

*page 8 line 22 read magistrates.
p 11. l 14 r. here p 22 l 32. r. so p 38.
l. 30. r. Lapnes p 40. l. 8. r. Searly*



A
SERMON
BEFORE THE
SYNOD, &c.

Heb. xiii. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves:---*



Thappens in the Disputes about Church-power, as in many others, that Men too eagerly flying one Extreme run into the opposite, and often miss the Truth which lies between them. For while the Patrons of Church-power, with the *Papists*, raise its Authority to an exorbitant and oppressive Height, some Advocates for Liberty sink it too low; and unwarily run into the Latitudinarian Scheme of Anarchy and Confusion, by maintaining such Principles

ciples as are utterly subversive of all Government, Discipline and Order in the House of God. I intend therefore, (in a humble Dependence upon the holy Spirit for his necessary Aids, and upon your Goodness, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, for a charitable Construction of the bold Attempt,) to state and illustrate the Pastor's Power and People's Obedience, in such a Manner as to avoid Extremes on either Hand, and to obviate some plausible Reasonings of a famous Latitudinarian Writer, against all Clergy Power or Authority of Churchmen of any Sort.

AND tho' it be a certain Truth, and the Foundation of Christianity, both in the earlier and later Ages thereof, that in Matters of Religion every Man must examine, believe, and judge for himself, according to the Holy Scriptures, and no Man hath Dominion over another's Faith; yet it is no less true, and certain from the sacred Oracles, that in the Church, some are to teach, others to be taught, some are to minister in holy Things, others to be ministred unto, and some are to rule, and others to obey. Hence the Apostle in the Text, gives it as a Charge to the Christian People, to obey them that rule over them, and submit unto them: Which it is plain, is to be understood of spiritual Guides or Rulers, from the Argument subjoined, drawn from their Nature and Usefulness, *For, says he, they watch for your Souls, as believing they must give an Account to God of their Charge and Office, and if they shall do it with Grief and not with Joy, this will be unprofitable, nay hurtful unto you the People, as well as unto them the Rulers.*

IN the first Part of the Verse, which I have chosen for my Text, we may notice these two Things.

1st, THAT

1st, THAT there are, and ought still to be, Persons in the Church, who have some Authority, some Rule and Power over others: This the Apostle clearly intimates, when he requires People to obey them that have such Rule or Government in the Church. The original Word *ἐπισκοπος* *having Rule*, as used by both sacred and prophane Writers, signifies moral Power or Authority. It is applied to our Saviour, *Matth. ii. 6.* and translated *Governor*: And with some Variation to *Tiberius* and *Pontius Pilate*, *Luke iii. 1.* pointing out the civil Power and Authority belonging to them respectively. The same Word is applied to *Judas* and *Silas*, *Acts xv. 22.* and tho' we translate it *Chief Men among the Brethren*, yet it plainly signifies *Men Ruling or Governing* among the Brethren. From which, and from the whole Circumstances of that Context, it appears, that others, besides the Apostles and preaching Elders or Teachers, namely some of the Christian Brethren joined in ruling the Church in that first Council, which is a fit Pattern for us to imitate. But tho' the original Word may include all Church-rulers, whether Pastors or Ruling-elders; yet because of the Reason subjoined, which is peculiar to the teaching Pastors, who in Scripture still are called Watch-men, and said to watch over others; And to prevent Confusion in the following Discourse, I shall consider it, only as pointing out the peculiar Power and Authority of the ordinary Pastors, or Bishops of the Christian Church, not excluding Ruling-elders, in such Instances of Power, as may be common to them with the preaching Presbyters or Pastors.

2^{dly}, The Duty of the Christian People to their spiritual Guides and Rulers, is here exprest in two Words; they are to *obey* them, and to *submit* unto them.

them. Not as if an absolute Obedience, and blind Submission were here required; but People are to obey, or to be persuaded by, their Ecclesiastical Superiors, so far as is reasonable and necessary for the great Purposes of Religion, and the Order of the Church, and suitable to that limited Power and Authority, with which the ordinary Teachers are invested from the Lord. They are not only to obey, but to submit themselves, which, says *Theophylact*, is an intense or high Obedience; that is, in Matters of Indifferency, which must be determined by some Authority or other, the People ought generally to be of a yielding condescending Temper, chearfully submitting to their Pastors superior Power and Judgment.

In further discoursing upon this Text and Subject, I shall endeavour as plainly as I can in such a narrow Compass,

I. To state and defend that Power and Authority, which the ordinary Pastors and Rulers of the Church are invested with from Jesus Christ, according to the Nature of their Office, and the Rules of the Gospel.

II. Speak a little of that Obedience and Submission, which is due from a Christian People, to such as have the Rule over them in spiritual Things. And,

III. Conclude with a short Address, first to the Pastors, and next to the People of the Christian Church.

AND I. I am to state and defend that Power and Authority, which the ordinary Pastors and Rulers of the Church are invested with from Jesus Christ, according to the Nature of their Office, and the Rules of the Gospel.

AND

AND in the New Testament, Bishops and Presbyters or Preaching Elders being the same Thing, both in Name, Power, and Office, I shall make no Distinction between them, but use indifferently, Bishops, Presbyters, Pastors or Ministers, for the same Office, as they occur, without Regard to that Distinction, which Ecclesiastical Custom and Authority hath unwarrantably made between them, in some Churches.

AND that I may proceed the more regularly in this large and intricate Subject, I shall do these two Things,

1st, SHEW that there is, and ought to be, a standing Office of Pastors or Teachers, by Divine Appointment, in the Church of God. And 2^{dly}, Consider more particularly the Nature and Extent of that Power and Authority, with which they are invested by Jesus Christ.

1. As to the *first*, That there is and ought to be, a standing Office of Pastors or Teachers by Divine Appointment in the Church of God, may be plain to every honest Man who will consult his Bible. For there we find, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone it belongs to fix Ordinances in his Church, and to appoint, send, or authorize Persons to dispense them, *gave at first Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers for the Work of the Ministry*; * And to edifie the Body of Christ, in that and every succeeding Age, till all come to Perfection, that is to the End of the World.

Concerning the Succession, in which the Pastoral office was to be continued, we have these Words of Paul to Timothy 2 Epistle ii. 2. *The Things which thou hast heard of me, among many Witnesses, the same*

* Eph. 4. 11, 12, 13.

same commit thou to faithful Men, who shall be able to teach others also. And the same Apostle tells us 1 *Tim.* iii. 1. That he who desires the Office of a Bishop, desires a good Work, plainly intimating that it was to be a standing Office in the Church of God. And among the other Qualifications of a Bishop, there laid down, this is one, that he rule well his own House : For says the Apostle, v. 5. *If a Man know not how to rule his own House, how shall he take care of, or rule the Church of God?* thereby intimating, that when a Man is put into the Office of a Bishop, he hath some Power, some Authority over the Church of God, which he had not before. By the very Charter constituting the Christian Church, Jesus hath declared, that there shall be Pastors in it, to the End of the World ; fixed their necessary Qualifications, and the Rules, according to which they are to be set apart for that Work and Service. And accordingly we find the Apostles ordained Elders, Presbyters or Bishops, in every Church, Acts xiv. 23. and gave them a Power of ordaining others, duely called and qualified according to Scripture Rules ; as well as of performing any other Part of the Ministerial Work, otherwise the Pastoral Office must cease with the Apostles. For in the New Testament we find none besides the ordinary Pastors, Presbyters or Bishops commissioned to ordain others. And *Timothy* seems plainly to have been ordained by a College or meeting of Presbyters, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14.

BUT to proceed *Clemens Romanus*, * a Fellow-labourer with the Apostles, tells us, That the Apostles Preaching through Towns and Countries appointed or ordained the first Fruits of their Labours, that is, the

* Ep. 1 ad Corinth.

the first Converts to Christianity, Bishops or Ministers, to them who should afterward believe. And in another Place, he tells us, That they gave Rules; that when those died, whom they had ordained, other Men try'd and approv'd should succeed in their Room, and receive their Ministry. It is very plain, from the current Testimony of succeeding Writers, nay of all Antiquity, that the Church still had a peculiar Order of Men, set apart to minister in Things sacred. And where ever Christianity hath obtained, we find in Fact, a standing Office of Pastors or Teachers hath been received, as necessary in the Church of God. And the Opposers of all Clergy-Power were generally in every Age reckon'd Enemies to Christianity at bottom, whatever fair Pretences they put on. Nay, Heathens, as well as *Jews*, had their Priests, which shews us, that a standing Office of Men to minister in holy Things is agreeable to Reason, as well as to Scripture, and Antiquity. But it is not my present Design to shew the Reasonableness of a standing Ministry from the Light of Nature; since those I have to do with, acknowledge a Divine Revelation, and pretend to reason from it, against that sacred Office. The Apostle's Question, *Rom. x. 15. How shall they preach except they be sent?* makes it weak and foolish, unreasonable, absurd and dangerous for Persons to pretend to preach, or minister in Holy Things, without a Mission, according to Scripture Rules. And we freely own, none cometh with sufficient Authority to preach the Gospel and rule the Church, whom Christ doth not send, either in an ordinary or extraordinary Way. But then to say, as some do, * that none have a Commission from Christ to preach the Gospel, as his Ambassadors, but such as are named immediately by him, and have their

* See Rights of the Christian Church asserted:

their Charge assigned them from Heaven, is altogether groundless and unreasonable, an unwarrantable Straining of a Metaphorical Term, which they cry out against in other Cases, and a downright Denial of all Mission in an ordinary and mediate Way. It is every whit as absurd, as to say, the ordinary Magistrates of a Burgh, tho' chosen and invested according to the Rules of their Charter, have no Power nor Authority over the City, because not named and chosen immediately by the Sovereign. Jesus Christ having, in the Holy Scriptures, the grand Charter of the Christian Church, appointed an Order of Men, to be set apart for the Service of the Sanctuary, fixed their Qualifications, and the Rules according to which they are to be chosen and set apart; when the ordinary Pastors of the Church, who have a Power of ordaining others, as well as of dispensing the Sacraments, do set any Persons apart for that Office, who are duly called by the Church, and qualified according to Scripture Rules, they may be said to be sent, and commissioned by Christ, as much as the Magistrate of a Burgh, can be said to be commissioned by their Sovereign to execute the Laws, and dispense Justice in such a Place. Nay, they are as truly sent by Christ into the Ministry, as the first Apostles and Preachers were, tho' not altogether after the same manner. And in ordinary Cases, none are warranted to preach the Gospel, and minister in Holy Things, except such as are thus regularly sent, and set apart by the Pastors of the Church, according to the Rules of the Gospel. But in Cases of extreme Necessity, for which no Law can provide, (according to the known Maxim, *Necessity hath no Law*) the Matter alters; for when a real Necessity occurs of Preaching the Gospel without such

such a Regular Mission, that very Necessity, being a plain Intimation of the Will of God, will doubtless supply the Defects of an ordinary Mission, as has been generally owned, in the Case of *Frumentius* and *Edeſius*, mentioned by our *Ecclesiastical Historians*; and this is not to set Matters loose, nor to break open the sacred Inclosure of the Pastor's Work, for under the *Old Testament*, when the Priests Mission and Office was sufficiently circumscribed, extreme Necessity made Alterations therein, and seems to have laid open some Parts of it, without subverting the whole in ordinary Cases.

AND tho' under the New Testament, Religion is now every Mans Business, (as indeed it still was by the Law of God) and all Christians are called, indifferently, to *exhort*, instruct and admonish, *one another daily*, as they have Ability, and Opportunity, *Heb. iii. 13. &c.* yet these, and the like friendly Offices of Religion may well be performed mutually, without incroaching upon the Pastors peculiar Work. These and the like general Exhortations, obtained under the Old Testament, when it is plain the Priests Office was a sacred Inclosure; and why may they not as well obtain under the New, without levelling all Christians as to Things sacred? All Subjects are by Law required to keep the Peace, and to be mutually assisting to one another for that End; and yet no Man imagines, that such general Calls warrant every one to act the part of a Justice of the Peace, except in Cases of extreme Necessity, of which I have already spoke. The Apostle's Questions *1 Cor. xii. 29. Are all Apostles? are all Prophets? are all Teachers*, or Pastors? plainly make the Office of Pastors peculiar to some Men now as well as that of the Apostles was at first: And by a
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clear consequence exclude others from meddling with it. As in a Testament, where, by the Nature of the Deed, all are excluded, except the several Legatees described, without any exclusive Clauses expressly mentioned ; so, tho' there be no exclusive Clauses in those Scriptures, mentioning the Pastor's Work and Qualifications, yet his Office is sufficiently inclosed, and others not so called, sent and qualified, are plainly excluded by the Nature of the Work, and the Directions given.

I only add one Passage more, to shew that the Pastor's Office is perpetual and peculiar now under the New Testament, as well as under the Old. As of old, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. *They that served at the Altar lived by the Altar, so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.* This passage clearly ascertains the Pastor's Maintenance, and shews his Office to be perpetual in the Church, and his Work as a Preacher to be peculiar to some, not common to all Christians : For if according to the levelling Principles of some celebrated Writers, all may lawfully preach the Gospel, then by our Lord's Appointment all should live of the Gospel, which would introduce Anarchy and Confusion into both Church and State with a Witness.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew, that there is, and ought still to be, a standing Office of ordinary Pastors or Ministers by Divine Appointment in the Church of God, and defended their Mission and Office, against the bold Attacks of some Latitudinarian Writers, who would break down the sacred Inclosure, and make all spiritual Things common. And it seems to have been only such ordinary Pastors and Church Rulers, as are thus called and sent in an ordinary Way, which the Apostle had

had in his Eye, when he gave the People this Charge in the Text, *to obey them.*

2. I proceed now to the second Thing proposed upon this Head, namely to consider more particularly the Nature and Extent of that Power and Authority, with which the ordinary Pastors and Rulers of the Church seem to be invested by Jesus Christ. And in the Entry upon this part of my Discourse, it may not be amiss to observe, that as by Authority in general is commonly understood, a Moral Power or Right, peculiar to some Men, not common to all, of doing and enjoining Things competent for them, and needful to be determined; so by the Clergy's Power and Authority there I understand a peculiar Right of doing and enjoining such Things, as in ordinary Cases are competent for them alone to do or enjoin, and necessary to be determined by them, according to the Nature of their Office and the Rules of the Gospel.

AND as their Authority is derived not from their Ordainers, who only open the regular Door of entering into this Office, but from Jesus Christ, the only King and Head of the Church universal; so the Exercise thereof is limited and circumscribed, not so much by the Rules of Men, as by the Laws of Jesus the chief Shepherd, and universal Bishop of the Christian Church. But I conceive this Matter will be better illustrated by a few Instances of Church Power justly limited, than by abstract Reasonings upon Authority in general, or upon the Pastor's Power in particular: And therefore I shall briefly consider the Nature and Extent of Church-mens Power, under the following particular Instances.

1. AND here first the Question is not concerning
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the various Schemes of ecclesiastical Polity, framed by ingenious Men ; not, what great Authority aspiring Church-men have acquired in some Parts of the World ; nor, with how little they have rested satisfied in others ; but Jesus Christ having established the Christian Church, and a standing Office of Pastors therein ; the Question precisely is, what Power, what Authority he hath invested them with ?

And if we look into the New Testament, we shall find the great Business of a Pastor is to preach the Gospel, to instruct Sinners in the way of Salvation, to preside in, or lead the publick Devotions of the Church, and to dispense those sacred Rites, called Sacraments, to the Christian People : And as this is the great and principal Work to which he is called, so it is plain, he hath all Power and Authority necessary to a regular Discharge thereof, according to the Rules of the Gospel. A Pastor indeed hath no Power to make new Articles of Faith, or other Terms of Salvation than Christ hath laid down. For he is not a Lawgiver but a Servant under Christ in the House of God ; his work in preaching, is to explain and inculcate those Principles and Duties laid down by Jesus in the Holy Scriptures. And in order to this, he may lay together such different Texts as illustrate and confirm his Subject, endeavour to make People perceive the plain and necessary consequences flowing from them, and warn them of their Danger, if they receive them not. His Business is to interpret Scripture, and cause People understand the Meaning thereof. But then, a Pastor's Power of interpreting Scripture, is not absolute, nor uncontrollable : For to give him an absolute
Power

Power of interpreting Scripture, and of obliging others unconditionally to receive his Interpretation right or wrong, would be to make him a Lawgiver, in the Church of God; and destroy that natural Right which Christians have to search the Scriptures, and examine what is taught them, whether it be agreeable to these holy Oracles or not. With preaching the Gospel, we find dispensing the Sacraments usually joined in Scripture: To do which the Pastors of the Church have doubtless a Power from Jesus Christ. But here it would be noticed, that Pastors have not a Power of making new Sacraments, or of embellishing the old ones by their own Inventions: This belongs to Jesus Christ the only King and Head of his Church. But then Ministers are, by Divine Appointment, the Stewards of these sacred Mysteries, and should not only dispense them, but keep them from being profaned by ignorant or scandalous Persons. This is a Piece of Church Discipline plainly in the Pastor's Power, otherwise he cannot celebrate those sacred Rites, according to the Intention of Jesus in instituting them. And the Pastor's Power in dispensing these holy Mysteries, is not absolute nor arbitrary; for it being the Duty, as well as the Privilege, of all professed Christians to partake of the Sacraments of Christ's Appointment, every Pastor seems bound to dispense them, to all credible Professors of Christianity who desire the same; unless he can assign a competent Ground, such as gross Ignorance, or a scandalous Practice for his Refusal.

2. Though every Minister be a Pastor of the Church universal, and so hath an inherent Power of dispensing Ordinances to any Part of it, when he is

duly called ; yet in a constitute Church, it is fit and expedient, nay necessary, to prevent Disorder and Confusion, that Ministers have distinct Parts of the Lord's Vineyard assigned them, in which they are statedly to labour : And to which they bear a peculiar Relation, as the Pastors or Bishops of that Congregation. To divide a Kingdom into various Provinces, Counties, Districts or Parishes, for the more easy dispensing of Justice, and the more equal Assessment of the Lieges, belongs doubtless to the civil Magistrate, or supreme Ruler in the State ; and when the Magistrates Divisions are small, as with us, and particular Benefices annexed to each distinct Parish, it is but just and reasonable for Church Rulers to have a Regard to those legal Divisions, in settling of particular Pastors. But then the fixing of a spiritual Relation between such a Pastor and such a People, the determining the Bounds or Number of a single Congregation or Church, among which he is statedly to labour, is intirely in the Hands of the Pastors or Rulers of the Christian Church. The Relation between a Bishop and his People seems to arise from the mutual Consent of both, and the Sentence of Church Rulers or Pastors establishing the same. And when these three Wills or Consents concur, *viz.* The Consent of the Pastor, or Person to be received as such, the Consent of the People, or of those upon whom the Peoples Right devolves, and the Consent or Sentence of a Church Judicatory competent ; these three, I say concurring, fix a spiritual Relation between such a Pastor and such a People, unto whom he ought statedly to minister in holy Things ; but tho' a Pastor be statedly to labour, in one particular Congregation thus committed

ted to his Charge, yet he ceaseth not to be a Minister of the Church Universal; and in his private Managements, and sacred Ministrations amongst his own Flock, he ought to have a Regard to the whole Society, or Body of Christians scattered through the World. For,

3. If we look into the New Testament, we shall find the whole Church of Christ, whether visible or invisible, represented as one single Society, consisting of Pastors and People, united together by the strictest Ties. All the Congregations of Christians, scattered through the World, are represented as one moral or political Body and Society, made up of various Members; illustrated, by a beautiful Comparison of it to a City, *Psal.* cxxii. 3. and to the Body natural, *Rom.* xii. 45. and, *1 Cor.* xii. 12, -- 30. And this Representation of the Church, as one organical Body, consisting of many Members, lays a Foundation for the Pastors and Rulers of many single Congregations uniting together, for the joint Government of the Whole, which is PRESBYTERY. There are many ecclesiastical Matters, which are of common Concernment to many single Congregations, such as the Trial of Church-officers, the Ordaining and Deposing of Pastors, or the like: And it is agreeable both to Scripture and Reason, that Matters of common Concernment should be managed jointly, by the united Pastors and Rulers of the several Congregations interested. And tho' we have no express Command, for Ministers, thus meeting together in Councils, or Synods, for the better Government of the Church, and the more effectual Exercise of Discipline; yet we have Scripture-warrant for it, not only from the general Representation

presentation of the Church as one Society or Body politick, but from the xv. Chap. of the *Acts*, where we find the Pastors of several Congregations meeting together, and giving an authoritative Decision, in Matters of common Concernment: And elsewhere Mention is made of the Eldership *, or Presbytery, as of a common Council. These Examples, together with the New Testament Representation of the Church, as one single Society, or Body politick, diffused through various Parts of the Earth, overturn the Independent Scheme, and show the Mistakes of those, who represent the Christian Church, as several distinct Bodies independent of each other. And this Representation of the Church gives likewise a plain and good Reason, why Church Censures, as well as Church Privileges, regularly dispensed in any one Part of the Catholick Church, should extend their Efficacy thro' the whole; namely, because the Church, however scattered, is one organical Body, established by the universal Laws of Christ her King, and governed by Pastors of divine Appointment, who bear a Relation to the whole Church, and whose Power is every where the same according to the Laws of Jesus. And agreeably enough to the native Genius of this Christian Society or Body, all common Affairs of the Church would be managed, by one common Judicatory, Presbytery, or Eldership, did the Circumstances of Mankind allow it to take Place. But this being impossible, in the present State of Things, the necessary Condition of human Affairs diverts the Government of the Christian Church, from the
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* 1 Tim. 4: 14.

one Current, in which it naturally flows, into several lesser Streams and Rivulets. Hence arise national Churches, and in them Assemblies, and Councils of various Forms, more or fewer, according as the Church shall determine, agreeably to the Exigency of Affairs, and Circumstances of Christians.

AND tho', according to this Scheme, the last Resort of Church Power would naturally be in the united Body of the Pastors and Rulers of the Church universal, or their Delegates, which would make a truly General or Catholick Council; yet, in the present Circumstances, this being impracticable, it seems agreeable, both to Scripture and Reason, and is on many Accounts necessary and expedient, that the last Resort of Church Power be lodged in the supreme Judicatory of each national Church; that so the Subjects of one Kingdom may not be obliged to have Recourse to another, for ecclesiastical more than for civil Affairs. For tho' national or particular Churches be but Parts of that diffusive Body, the Church universal, yet they are represented in Scripture, as having all Church-power, necessary for their good Government and Order, within themselves. Accordingly we find the Church of *Corinth* blamed, for not inflicting the highest Church-Censure upon that incestuous Person amongst them: * Which evidently supposeth that particular Church to be possessed of sufficient Power for that End, without waiting the Direction of the Church universal. And by Parity of Reason, the like may be said now of any national or particular Church through the Christian World: Namely, That the last

* 1 Cor. 5. 1, .. 6.

last Resort of Church Power is, and may be, lodged in her supreme Judicatory, extending to all her Members; nay, to all professed Christians within her Bounds, who shall at any Time fall under her Cognizance. And this radical Power lodged in the united Body of the Pastors and Rulers of a national Church, or their Delegates, may be branched out and distributed into several lesser Judicatories, more or fewer, as the Church shall determine, and the Circumstances of Christians require.

4. I observe, That the Power of Pastors, or Church Rulers, even united together in larger or lesser Judicatories, is still limited and circumscribed, by the Laws of Jesus Christ: It is neither Absolute nor Legislative in Matters of Faith and Salvation. All these are already determined by Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Lawgiver in spiritual Things; and no Society of Men upon Earth have Power, either to enlarge the Terms of Salvation, or to make them narrower than Christ hath done. But as single Pastors may lay before their People, the plain and necessary Consequences of Scripture, so the united Pastors of any particular Church may doubtless lay together such Texts of Scripture, and their native Consequences, as appear to them of greatest Importance in Christianity; and express these Truths in other than scripture Words: For it is the Sense, not the Sound, which makes a Proposition true or false, scriptural or unscriptural. And since Church Officers are not only impowered, but required, to try others before they ordain them, to examine if they be *found in the Faith, apt to teach, and able to convince Gainsayers*, which clearly implies a Power of rejecting them, if they are not so qualified; it appears to me a native Consequence of this, that Pastors

stors may from Scripture frame such a Declaration, or Confession of Faith, as may be a fit Mean and proper Test, to know whether a Candidate be so qualified or not. And such a Method secures a Candidate more, from the Oppressions of an imposing Spirit, than if Matters were left at large, without any such Formulary; for then he would be altogether at the Discretion of every particular Presbytery, or Judicatory that should try his Soundness. And according to the present Circumstances of Christians, it seems altogether impracticable, that any Church could be so constitute, as to admit of a legal Establishment without some Formulary of Faith, signed and adhered to by her several Officers. And such a Formulary, or Confession of the necessary and important Articles of Christianity, being once established agreeably to Scripture, any Person that comes not up to it, hath no Reason to complain, if he is not admitted an Officer or Pastor in that Church, because he is deprived of no Birth-right Privilege, or of nothing that belongs to him, as a Man and as a Christian.

AND when Controversies of Faith spring up in any Age, by which the Body of the People are endangered, then the Pastors of the Church may doubtless meet together, examine, and determine the same, not in an absolute, but in a ministerial Way. And when any Synod of the Clergy hath impartially examined a controverted Point, so far as to settle their Opinions about it, they may certainly decree, that such is their Doctrine. And when such Definitions are made, by the Body of the Pastors of any Church, all Persons within the same, do owe great Respect to their Decision. Modesty must be observed in after Reasonings about it; and if a Man finds

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his own Thoughts differ from it, he ought to examine the Matter over again, with much Attention and Care, with a just Distrust of his own Understanding, and a humble Respect to the Judgment of his Superiors. But if after all due Methods of Enquiry, a Man cannot agree with the publick Decisions, his Conscience is not under Bonds from Men, since their Authority is not absolute, nor grounded upon a Promise of Infallibility, as all true Protestants must grant. But to proceed,

5. The Church's Power about indifferent Things, *i. e.* Matters not determined by any Law of God, either natural or revealed, is a Subject of much Debate, even among Protestants themselves; some declare very roundly for the Church's Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, alledging that if the Pastors or Rulers of the Church have not a Power to determine in all indifferent Things, then they have no Power at all: For according to them, this is the only Measure that can be given in the Matter. But as our Church claims no such Power, so for clearing this Matter, it may be of Use to observe, that all things lawful are not expedient, and there seems to be a plain Difference amongst Things not determined by the Law of God. Some of them are necessary to be determined, others not necessary; some of them have such a close Connection with the Things commanded, as that they must be determined some Way or other: Thus Time and Place are the necessary Circumstances of all publick Meetings; the Days of publick Fastings, Thanksgivings, and Communion are of the same Nature; and as these and the like indifferent Things must be determined by some Authority or other, so I make no Doubt but
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the Rulers of the Church have an inherent Power of determining them, in such a Way as shall be most expedient for the Body of the Christian People over whom they watch.

'Tis true indeed, Days of Fasts or Thanksgivings do in their own Nature put such a Stop to Courts and Markets, and all civil Business or secular Affairs, that it seems expedient both for the People and Rulers of a Christian Church, to consult the civil Magistrate, when they make them national, or to extend to any considerable Body of the Lieges; and when the Magistrate sees fit, to call his Subjects to such a Duty, the Pastors of the Church ought doubtless to comply therewith, unless some peculiar Circumstances make their Compliance sinful. But then tho' Church Rulers have a Power of determining these and the like indifferent Matters, which must be determined some way or other, it by no means follows, that they have an absolute Power of determining all indifferent Matters, of whatever sort. Because the Church, from an urgent Call in Providence, may appoint a Fast or a Thanksgiving Day, it by no means follows, that she may convert the half of our Time into Holy Days or anniversary Festivals. And to give Church Rulers such a Power would be to introduce Ecclesiastical Tyranny, which is as mischievous to the Church as regal Tyranny is to the State.

Again, It ought to be remembred, that every Thing which a Man may lawfully practise himself, cannot be lawfully imposed upon others. Tho' a Man may lawfully do himself what is not forbidden, yet there is more than this necessary to invest him with a Power to deprive others of their natural Freedom. For besides a Commission, there must be some visi-

ble Utility, or Expediency in the Thing it self, to the whole or major Part of the Society, before it can warrantably be made a Law or Canon binding the whole. And since from what hath been said, it appears, that the Church's Power extends not absolutely to all indifferent Things, but only to such as must be determined some way or other, because of their Connection with commanded Duty, and to such as tend visibly to the greater spiritual Good and Edification, if not of the whole Society, yet of the greater Part thereof; it plainly follows, that Church-Rulers or Governours have great need of Prudence, Equity and Moderation in their Decisions about indifferent Matters. And tho' it be fit and necessary to have general Rules, about things which often occur in the Church, such as the previous Steps for Trial of those who are to be licensed or ordained, the Time and Manner of Rebuking scandalous Persons, and the like publick Things, frequently occurring in the Church; yet wise Governours are sparing to multiply Rules about indifferent Things, lest they prove burdensome to Christians, and embarrass the Discipline of the Church.

6. And now I am led to speak a little of the Pastor's Power in censuring scandalous Persons, commonly called the Discipline of the Church. If an Offence be private, we are to endeavour to remove it, in a private Way, as our Saviour directs, *Matt. xviii. 15.* but when a Sin becomes open and publick, so as to be a stumbling block to others, then the Apostle directs the Pastors of the Church, to *rebuke* such scandalous Offenders openly or publickly, *that others also may fear, 1 Tim. v. 20.* And in order to this, it is plain, they must have a Power to convene, and try Persons for Scandals in a Judicial Way.
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And Ministers should endeavour to bring the Guilty to a Sense of their Sin, and to submit to the Censures of the Church, not by Force and Violence, (for Church-men as such have no Power of the Sword) but by dealing with their Consciences in a Rational and Scripture Method, and laying fairly before them the Judgments of God. And in case of Obstinacy, or manifest Contempt of the Church's Censures, our Saviour directs us how to deal with them, *Mat. xviii. 17.* Not by giving them up to the Civil Magistrate to be burnt or hanged, but to exclude them the Privileges of Church Membership, and treat them as Heathens. And as we are still bound to observe the Laws of Humanity, and Ties of Nature with a Heathen, so likewise with a Person under the Censures of the Church, tho' we are not to converse so familiarly with him, as with a Christian Friend or Brother.

AND as the Law of God revealed in Scripture, is the Measure of Right and Wrong, of Sin and Duty to all Christians; so of what is, or ought to be, scandalous and censurable in the Church of God: And Pastors have no Power to make Things scandalous or censurable as they please, nor can they justly decree that to be an Offence, which God has not declared to be one. Nay, the Censures of the Church are specified in Scripture, and the Rulers thereof have no Power to change them, nor to inflict arbitrary Pennances and Censures of their own Invention. They may admonish and rebuke scandalous Persons publicly or privately, as their Offence requires, and if one Rebuke answers not the End, they may doubtless renew the same a second, or a third Time, or oftner if they see Cause; and if the

the Transgressor proves obstinate, they may excommunicate him, that is, (as I understand it) they may exclude him all Church Privileges, and declare that he appears to them to be a Slave to Satan, and that he is to be treated as a Heathen, and avoided by Christians as an infectious and dangerous Person: And this is all their Power extends to.

It would further be noticed, that Church Censures are not properly penal, but of a medicinal Nature; they are inflicted not to destroy, but to recover the guilty, and preserve the innocent. And therefore scandalous Persons, under the highest Censures, are, upon their Submission and Repentance to be received into Church Communion again, and loos'd or absolv'd from Censures. And as this may be all that is meant by the binding and loosing, retaining and remitting of Sins mentioned in Scripture, when apply'd to the ordinary Pastors of the Church, * so it carries nothing in it unreasonable or absurd. For the Pastor's Power, in inflicting Censures and absolving from them, is (as in other Matters) only ministerial and conditional, ratified or not in Heaven, as God sees just.

I would further observe, That Errors or Heresies in Doctrine may, when scandalous, be the Objects of Church-Censure, as well as Sins in Practice. This appears plain from the Instances of *Hymeneus*, *Alexander* † and *Philetus*, mentioned 1 *Tim.* 1. 20. And the Epistles to *Pergamus* and *Thyatira*, two Churches in *Asia*, blamed for not censuring some Heretical Doctrines, *Rev.* ii. 14, 20. *A Heretick, after the first and second Admonition, is to be rejected*, as well

* Mat. 18. 18. † 2 *Tim.* 2. 17, 18

well as any other scandalous Person, *Titus* iii. 10. But then, as every Sin in Practice is not the Object of Church Discipline, so every Error in Doctrine is not to be censured as heretical; but only such as directly subverts the fundamental Articles of Religion, plainly established in Scripture, and makes a Man openly scandalous, and hurtful in the Church of Christ. The common Plea for exempting Hereticks from Censure, drawn from the Nature of humane Understanding, would, if pursued, exempt every Debauchee in Practice, who should pretend to justify it. For it is not in a Man's Power to love or hate, otherwise than according to the Appearances of Things, more than to believe or not as he pleaseth. But in reality, it is no good Plea at the Bottom, nor sufficient to exeem either the Heretick or the Prophane from the Censures of the Church. And in judging of all Scandals, Heresies as well as others, Men must proceed according to the *Ouverte* Acts sufficiently made known to them, without dipping into the secret Motives which influence them. A Man may be censured, for what is declared heretical in Doctrine, or scandalous in Practice, according to the Holy Scriptures, whatever be the secret Motives of his Belief or of his Practice. Of these Men are not competent Judges, nor ought they to meddle with them, but leave them to God who judgeth the Heart. But to judge of a Man's open Profession, which is an *Ouverte Act*, cognoscible by Men, is no usurping of God's Prerogative to judge the Heart. And as a Person duely convict of Heresy may be censured in the ordinary Way established in Scripture, so he is to be tryed according to the usual Method, that is, by Libel and Witnesses, if he

he confesseth not; for God hath not appointed different Methods of trying scandalous Persons. And a Person suspected of Heresy is not to be condemned as guilty merely for not answering Questions, no more than we would condemn any other Person, as guilty of a scandalous Crime, purely because he would not be his own Accuser, or declined to answer all the ensnaring Questions his Judges might think fit to propose unto him.

7. From the whole of what hath been said it appears, that the Clergy's Power is altogether of a spiritual Nature, distinct from and independent of that of the Civil Magistrate. To inform the Mind, convince the Conscience, and reform the Practice, is what faithful Pastors aim at; *for they watch for Souls, as those that must give an Account.* And the better to carry on their great Design, they meet, constitute, pass Sentence, and do every other Thing in the Name of Jesus, by his Authority, and according to the Rules laid down by him. They are not to meddle with Civil Matters, or Affairs of State, further than by way of Petition or Advice, when required.

THEIR Power is not coercive, and their Weapons are not carnal but spiritual, mighty through God to subdue Sinners, and to pull down the strong Holds of *Satan's* Kingdom. And as their Power is thus distinct from that of the Civil Magistrate, so it may justly be exercised independently of him; as it really was for the first 300 Years of Christianity, and now is, in this national Church under the Countenance and Protection of a gracious Sovereign, to whom we are all highly indebted for our Liberty. The Civil and Ecclesiastical Courts are so very distinct in their Nature, and instituted to such different Purposes

poses, that if they are managed with Prudence, and kept within their due Bounds and respective Limits, 'tis impossible there can be any Collision, or Interfeiring between them. And all the Absurdities alledged to flow from *imperium in imperio*, or two supreme Powers in the same Nation, arise, either from mistaken Notions of these two very distinct Powers, the sacred and the civil, or from the Abuse of either the one or the other, or of both. But no Argument can justly be drawn from the Abuse of any Power against 'tis Being and Lawfulness. To say that there should be no such Thing as Church Power, because it hath sometimes made Encroachments upon the State, and been abused to very wicked Purposes, is every whit as absurd as to say, that there ought to be no such Thing as regal Power, because it hath often been abused to Tyranny and Oppression. And put the Case, that these two Powers should contradict one another, suppose, with a late ingenious Writer, † that the Church should order a Man to the Temple, at the same Time, that the State calls him to the Camp; There is not here any Argument against the Existence of these two distinct Powers, nor any real Absurdity. For the Man is not really under two different Obligations at the same Time, and so under a Necessity of sinning, as the Argument supposeth; which would indeed be a real Absurdity; but he is only under a Necessity of considering the Matter duely in all its Circumstances, and obliged to prefer either the Church or the State, as he apprehends the present Exigency of Affairs requires. And in this Case, there seems to be no greater Perplexity, than what a Son is put to, when we suppose the Magistrates Orders

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† Rights of the Christian Church asserted.

to contradict his Father's, in a Matter within the paternal Power. By the Mismanagement of the respective Governours of Church or State, there may be contradictory Orders given; but these do not, cannot, lay contradictory Obligations upon the same Persons, at the same Time: And therefore do not prove the two Powers to be incompatible and inconsistent. No more than the paternal Power is proven to be inconsistent with the Magistrates Power in a City, because it is possible the Father and the Magistrate may, through some Mismanagement, give very contrary Orders to the Son at the same Time.

BUT tho' the pastoral Office be distinct from, and independent of that of the Civil Magistrate, yet the Persons possessed of this sacred Office, are truly Subjects in all civil Concerns, and as such accountable to the State, for all Crimes done against it: And for the same Person, to be accountable to the civil Magistrate in some Instances, and in others, wherein he is under superior Obligations to almighty God by virtue of another Character, to be independent of him, is no more absurd, than for the same Man to be both a Husband and a Subject, (a domestick Sovereign and a State Subject,) to the same Woman at the same Time: Which happened lately in the case of Prince *George* and Queen *Anne*.

IN a Word most of the Confusion, which some ingenious Men apprehend to be in this Matter, seems to arise from taking their Notions of Church Power, not from the New Testament, but from the particular Constitutions of this or the other Established Church; and from blending of civil and sacred Things together; which is too common in most established Churches, particularly that of *England*, where the Bishops Court, tho' cal-

called *Spiritual*, is yet truly of a civil Nature, and meddles as much with civil Things, as our *Commis-
sar Court* doth: And no Wonder then, that it is made to depend upon the State. But let Persons truly separate Things Sacred from Things Civil, let them observe the respective Boundaries assigned to each in Scripture, and make nothing an ecclesiastical Affair, but what the Scriptures hath made so, and let Church-men still remember, that they are Subjects in all civil Matters, and to meddle with Nothing as Judges, but what Jesus Christ hath made subject to their Authority in the holy Scriptures; and then all the fancied Absurdities, arising from a supposed Clashing of Powers, and a Collision of Jurisdictions, will quickly vanish and be gone.

8. FINALLY the Pastor's Power, as I have stated it, is by no Means inconsistent with private Judgment, and the common Rights of Christians. That some Church-men claim a Power inconsistent with these is plain; but because the absolute Power and infallible Authority of the Clergy is truly inconsistent with that just Liberty, which the Scripture hath left to every Christian, of examining and trying for himself; does it therefore follow, that the limited Power and ministerial Authority, which evangelical Pastors are invested with, by the Rules of the Gospel, is likewise inconsistent with these sacred and unalienable Rights of Mankind? No, by no Means. Every Person sees the Weakness of such an Inference in other Cases; because arbitrary Power, or tyrannical Government in the State, introduceth Slavery, and is inconsistent with the just Rights and Liberties of Mankind, does it follow, that a limited Government, and mild Administration is inconsistent with these valuable Rights and Privileges

of free-born Subjects? No wise Man will think so. And yet at the Bottom, this is all the Argument, drawn from that fruitful Topick of Liberty, against Church-power truly stated. But 'tis plain, a just Liberty is very consistent with a limited Government, both in Church and State. As the Light of Reason and of Revelation are not to be set in Opposition to one another, but both to be improv'd thankfully by the Christian, as valuable Blessings from God, necessary to lead him in the Way to Heaven and Happiness; so private Judgment and the Pastor's Authority are not to be set in Opposition to one another, but both to be used in a due Manner, as mutually helpful, and assisting to us in the great Purposes of Religion. A Guide's Assistance, in a difficult Road, may be as necessary and useful to a Traveller, as his own Eye-sight, and these two are by no Means inconsistent, but mutually helpful and assisting to him in his Journey. And for all the fine Things said, by some Men, in behalf of private Judgment, (which is still to be carefully maintained, as a Foundation-stone in our happy Reformation, and to be used discreetly in Examining the Decrees of all our lawful Superiors, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical) yet it is a plain Fact, obvious from Experience, that the Judgment and Capacity of the Bulk of Mankind, in improving the holy Scriptures, for their own Salvation, need all that Help and Assistance, which the most skilful and diligent Pastors, and the most judicious Commentators, can ordinarily give them. And tho' Modesty, and Submission to their Pastor's superior Skill and Judgment generally becometh private Persons, with respect to the darker Parts of Revelation; yet in plain Matters, and Things clearly revealed, if the Pastor should go astray

fray, the private Christian must doubtless do the best he can, to keep himself right in the Way to Heaven and Happiness.

THUS I have endeavoured to state and defend that Power and Authority, with which the ordinary Pastors and Rulers of the Church are invested by Jesus Christ, according to the Nature of their Office, and the Rules of the Gospel. The Importance of the Subject, and the Variety of Particulars necessary to be touched upon, in order to place it in a tolerable Light, will, I hope, plead my Excuse for the tedious Length thereof, on such an Occasion.

II. I proceed now to the second general Head, *viz.* To speak a little of that Obedience and Submission, which is due from a Christian People to their ordinary Pastors, or such as have the Rule over them in spiritual Things. And as the Pastor's Power is not absolute, so the People's Obedience and Submission is not to be unlimited nor implicate. If Church-rulers shall exceed their Powers, and require Things, either sinful or unnecessary and extravagant, then the People are not bound to obey them; but to *stand fast in that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free*, not slavishly submitting to the arbitrary Impositions of Men of like Passions with themselves. But when Church-rulers keep within their just Bounds, and meddle with nothing but what belongs to them by the Law of Jesus; when their Decrees, in Points of Faith, are only the plain and necessary Consequences of Scripture fairly stated, when their Censures are well founded and scriptural; and when their Authority is interposed, only to fix, by general Rules, such indifferent Matters, as must be determined some Way or other, for the
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greater Good and Edification of the Church ; then 'tis plain, they are, with Reverence and Submission, to be obeyed : And that for Conscience sake, as being the Institution of Jesus Christ, the Contempt whereof is sinful, and would introduce endless Anarchy and Confusion, into that well compacted Body the Church of Jesus.

As the Command of a lawful Superior, in Matters competent for him, and subject to his Authority, is owned by all, to lay a moral Tie and Obligation upon the Mind ; so, I apprehend, the Decrees of Church-rulers, regularly interposed in Matters competent for them, and subject to their Authority, lay a moral Tie and Obligation, upon the Minds of those Christian People, over whom they are appointed to watch. For if Obedience and Submission to our spiritual Guides and Rulers, be a Duty in some Cases, as the Text evidently declares it to be, 'tis plain their Commands, like the Commands of other lawful Superiors, must in such Cases oblige the Conscience, or lay a moral Tie upon the Minds of those Christian People subjected to their Authority, by the Laws of Jesus ; and the Contempt of such necessary and lawful Orders, about ecclesiastical Matters, must be sinful in the Sight of God, as well as disorderly in the Eye of Man. To give fixed and certain Rules, others than are already laid down in Scripture, whereby to know in all Cases, when Obedience to our spiritual Rulers is a Duty, and when Disobedience is sinful, would be hard, if not impossible in our present Circumstances ; neither is it necessary, for the general Rules, laid down for that Effect in Scripture, are sufficient to direct every honest Man of Prudence and Understanding, in this, as well as in other Matters of Practice.

Practice. And the Application of these, and all other general Laws concerning Sin and Duty, to particular Cases as they occur, must depend very much upon the Integrity, Skill and Prudence of every particular Christian. And all I propose further upon this Head, is to give a few plain Instances of that Obedience and Submission due from a Christian People to their Pastors and Overseers in the Lord, which may serve to illustrate the same. And,

1. **THE** People are bound, to assemble themselves at the appointed Times and Places, to hear the Word of God preached, by their respective Pastors, and to receive from them the Sacraments of Jesus, according to the Rules of the Gospel. This is so plain a Part of the Peoples Duty, that I need not insist upon it. Only I would notice, That no private Methods of Edification, such as Reading, Con- versing, or the like useful Ways of improving a lei- sure Hour, are to be brought in Competition with our Attendance upon a regular Ministry, and the stated Ordinances of Jesus Christ: For this would be, to make our selves wiser than God. And tho' some of the People should excel their Pastor, in the Knowledge of the holy Scriptures, and other Parts of useful Learning; yet this would not free them from their Obligations to attend upon his sacred Ministrations in the Sanctuary. For all, both learn- ed and unlearned, are obliged to join together in the publick Worship of God, and to attend the Word preached, as an appointed Means of begetting and increasing Faith, and every other Grace, in the Ex- ercise whereof the spiritual Life consists. For Faith ordinarily comes by hearing the Word preached, *Rom. x. 17.*

2. WHEN, at any Time, any of the People, or any of the Clergy themselves, are guilty of open and scandalous Transgressions of the Laws of Jesus, then they should penitently and voluntarily submit to those Censures which he hath appointed, and which Pastors are bound to inflict, according to the Rules of the Gospel. For if a Pastor is called by the Word, to rebuke publicly scandalous Offenders; then it is plain, they are called to hear such Rebukes and submit unto them. And if Offenders will not submit to such Censures, our Saviour tells us, they are to be cast out of the Church, and treated as Heathens, *Matth. xviii. 11.* And tho' some hardy Sinners may obstinately despise the Censures of the Church, and think it a Piece of Bravery to rebel against their spiritual Rulers, yet such ought seriously to consider, that the Time is coming, when *Jesus Christ shall be revealed from Heaven, in flaming Fire with his mighty Angels, to take Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son **. And sure they, who despise the Censures Christ hath appointed, disobey his Gospel, and shall be punished as such by him at last. And tho' there are, and will be, different Sentiments, and perhaps separate Communion, among professed Christians, while in this World; yet when the Scandal ariseth, not from the Transgression of the peculiar Rules of any particular Church, but from a plain Breach of the Laws of Jesus, wherein all are agreed; when the Matter is an Offence, not meerly to this and the other Body of Christians, but to the whole Church of Christ where it is known; then, me thinks, no Pretence of particular Sentiments, or of a separate Communion, should

* 2 Thef. i. 7, 8, 9.

should exempt Persons guilty of such Scandals from the Discipline of the established Church, whose Rulers are by Law made Judges of Scandal: Especially when the Discipline and Censures of such a Church are not human Penances, nor arbitrary Impositions, but such as are plainly appointed by Jesus Christ the King and Head of the Church universal.

3. WHEN the Church hath fully examined any Point of Difference or Scandal competent for her, and given her final Decision therein, then it becomes the Duty of all her Members to submit unto it; unless peculiar Circumstances make it sinful for any particular Person to do so. Thus for Instance, when the Supreme Judicatory of this National Church hath given her final Decision in any Point of Difference, suppose in a Competition of Calls, or the like Matter competent for her, then I am bound to submit, tho' the Sentence pronounced should not be agreeable to me. Nay suppose, the Sentence to be wrong, yet being pronounced by the last Resort of a Power competent, it must take Place. For a Sentence pronounced by competent Authority, and the supreme Power, must be valid tho' not right; otherwise Anarchy and Confusion would be unavoidable in any Society or Church, and every Man, or Party, would be Judge in his own Cause. Much the like may be said in any point of Scandal, suppose for Instance, a Minister under Process for Scandal, should at last be deposed, in his Apprehension unjustly, yet he is bound to submit. For an innocent Person had better patiently and christianly suffer an unjust Censure, and submit to it, than throw the whole Church into Confusion and Disorder, by Disobedience, upon such Principles, as would enervate all Church Authority, introduce Anarchy, and

make every Man a Judge in his own Cause. Indeed, when a Man is not only condemned unjustly, but condemned to do a Thing in his Apprehension sinful, which may happen in some Circumstances, then the Case alters, and I cannot say that he is bound to submit in such Circumstances. For no human Sentence can oblige a Man to do a sinful Thing, tho' it may and will oblige him to suffer an unjust Censure, when he can submit without Sinning.

4. I might mention that inward Love and Esteem, as well as that outward Reverence and Respect, due from People to their Pastors, as a Part of the Obedience and Submission here required. For in other Cases, Obedience and Submission always includes the Esteem and Love, the Respect and Reverence of those whom we are enjoined to obey. And that it is likewise here intended, appears plain from that parallel Text, *1 Thes. v. 12, 13.* Where the Apostle exhorts the *Bretheren to know, or respect, them that labour among them, and are over them, in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Works sake :* But this I do not insist upon, lest I should be mistaken. Only I must be allowed to say, that tho' the Ministers of this Church, never stand upon Points of Honour, nor dispute Precedencies with their People ; tho' their Names be not adorned with many Honorary Titles ; nor their Persons surrounded with a splendid Equipage ; nor their Labours encouraged with rich Benefices ; yet poor and plain as they are, they deserve as much Respect and Reverence, as much Esteem and Love, as any Body of Clergy, perhaps in the Christian World ; being diligent in their Ministerial Labours,

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regular in their Lives, and the Generality competently learned and knowing.

I only add, That any single Pastor or Church Officer is as much bound to obey his superior Judicatory as a Lay-man. And so what hath been said of the Obedience and Submission, due from the People to their Pastors, may easily be applied to particular Ministers with respect to the several Church Judicatories that are their Superiors. And the like may be said of inferior Judicatories, with Respect to those above them. And for any particular Judicatory to refuse Submission and Obedience to their Superiors in Things lawful and competent, under Pretence of a radical Power, is just as if a private Christian or particular Pastor should disobey his Presbytry under Pretence of private Judgment, a Power as radical as any Person or Society can claim. And as the Crime seems much the same in both Cases, so the Anarchy and Confusion is remarkably greater and more dangerous in the one Case than in the other; the Disobedience of a particular Person does little harm, in comparison of the Rebellion of a whole Society, or Judicatory, against their lawful Superiors.

III. I shall now quickly conclude this long Discourse, with a short Address, first, unto the Pastors and Rulers of the Church, and next, to the Body of the Christian People.

I. And now, my very Reverend Fathers and Brethren, tho' you know your Power, and your Duty, better than I can represent either unto you; yet suffer me to put you in Mind, that all your Power is Ministerial, given for the Edification and not for

the Destruction of the Church of Jesus. For this End are you made Preachers of Righteousness, Dispensers of the sacred Mysteries of our Religion, and Rulers in the House of God; use then all your Power and Authority for this great and valuable End. Let your Sermons be such as will edify, not amuse the People, such as will enlighten the Mind, as well as heat the Heart. Let the Strength of your Reasonings, and the weight of your Arguments, fetch'd from those sacred Fountains of Reason and Revelation, fasten the Conviction, and command the Obedience of your Hearers, more than the bare Authority of your Character. A Pastor's *ipse dixit*, unless supported with suitable Argument, goes but a short way in this Age, and it is Weakness to lay the Stress of any Cause or Truth upon it.

LET us in the Exercise of Discipline, and in all our Judicial Proceedings, be wise and prudent, just and faithful, impartial and zealous. Let never our Passions aggravate a Crime beyond its just Demerit, nor strong Jealousies pass for clear Proofs. Let us, like the aged Oak, bear with inflexible Firmness, all Storms arising either from the Rage of the People, or the Frowns of the Great. Let us remember that tho' there be Cases, in which Prudence and Expediency must take Place, yet always in a consistency with Justice and Equity; and let us still endeavour to keep the golden Mean, between an obstinate Stiffness and a childish Fickleness, between a rigid Severity and a criminal Laxness in all our Managements. 'Tis a known saying, *summum jus, summa injuria*, and the Rigor of Church Discipline may in some Cases be unjust, as well as the Rigor of Law. Besides, Authority overstretched, like a Bow over-

overbended, loseth its Force and weakens its Influence. And tho' Anarchy and Confusion, the native Consequences of *Libertine* Principles, are to be avoided and guarded against by all Church-Rulers, as destructive to Peace and Truth, Discipline and Order in the House of God; yet let us always remember, that Christianity hath suffered more from an overgrown Authority in the Church; Popery is a fatal Instance, how much Mischief an exorbitant Church-Power hath done to Religion. Let us then beware of a Popish Spirit, mingling with our Councils or our Assemblies. Let us still bear in Mind that all the Power and Authority which we can justly claim, is a Trust which we may forfeit by our Mismanagements, and for which we are to be accountable to our Ecclesiastical Superiors here, as well as to God hereafter. Let us then study so to manage in every Affair as that we may give in our Accounts with the Approbation of our great and omniscient Judge, and enter into the Joy of our Lord at last. And let us remember, that nothing will create us more Respect and Reverence in the Minds of People, than the Piety, Prudence, Justice, and Integrity of all our Proceedings; for even *Herod* feared and revered *John the Baptist*, *Because he knew him to be a Just Man and a Holy*, Mark vi. 20. In a Word let us all endeavour, like the He-goats, to go before our respective Flocks, in every Thing that is valuable and Praise worthy, particularly in a strict Observance of those few easy and equitable Rules, which our Church hath in great Wisdom made, for the better Management of Ecclesiastical Affairs; for if we transgress those Rules our selves, how can we expect that the People will submit unto them.

AND

AND may all our reverend Pastors still consider, that a just Moderation is the Glory, Strength, and Safety of any Christian Church, particularly of the Presbyterian Church of *Scotland*; and may it be so while Sun and Moon endure: This will make her Beautiful as *Tirzah*, comely as *Jerusalem*, and terrible as an Army with Banners.

II. As to you, my dear beloved Friends and Brethren, the Christian People of every Rank and Denomination now hearing me; to you I address the Exhortation in the Text, *Obeys them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves; for they watch for your Souls, as those that must give an Account.* We claim no lordly Dominion over your Consciences, nor desire you to submit to a burdensome Yoke of arbitrary Ceremonies; all we seek is, That you obey the Gospel, and submit to the Institutions of Jesus, our common Lord, and only Sovereign in spiritual Things. We have no Designs upon you, but what are for your Good, and claim no Submission but what is for your spiritual Benefit and Advantage. Are any of you overtaken in a Fault, we desire to restore such an one in the Spirit of Meekness, not by carnal Severities and human Penances, but by brotherly Admonitions and friendly Rebukes, according to the Rules of the Gospel; why then will ye not submit to such gentle Discipline, as Christ himself hath appointed for your Good? We endeavour to enlighten the Understanding, and convince the Conscience of every Gainfayer, not by the *wholesome Severities* of Fines and Imprisonments, Racks and Gibbets; but by the calmest Reasoning, and mildest Discipline, Methods of Christ's Appointment, and not of our Invention. As our Authority is gentle, and ever employed

employed for your Good, according to the best of our Skill, so your Obedience should be free and chearful. An obdured Sinner, a hardened Atheist, may spend his Venom against Religion, in a bitter Irony, or a spiteful Saying, to make the Clergy contemptible ; he may, by low Wit and strong Malice, make us the Drunkard's Song, and the Fool's Laughing-stock ; but all these Arrows will at last recoil upon himself with redoubled Fury, and aggravate his Guilt, and his Misery throughout Eternity : For never a reproachful Saying, maliciously uttered against a worthy Minister, but Christ looks upon it, as exprest against himself, and will accordingly punish it at last. But, my Friends, *I hope better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, tho' I thus speak* ; I hope, you will rejoice our Hearts and strengthen our Hands, by a ready receiving of the Word and Sacraments from us, and a dutiful Compliance with the Discipline of Jesus. I hope you are not, like Children, tossed to and fro, *carried about with divers and strange Doctrines* * ; but like the unchangeable Author of our holy Religion, fixed and constant in your pious Principles and Practices, according to the holy Scriptures. Like the towering *Alps*, fixed invariably on a good Foundation ; look down, with a Mixture of Pity and just Disdain, upon those unstable Souls, who, like the fickle Weather-cock, turn with every changing Wind.

I hope you will not reject our Counsels, nor despise our Admonitions all intended for your Good. Is not he an ungrateful Patient, who flights the Counsels, and contemns the Person of his faithful Physician

* Ver. 8. 9.

Physician, that watcheth Night and Day for his Recovery? We, like spiritual Physicians, watch and pray, toil and labour both Night and Day, to recover you from the Disease of Sin, and the Snares of Satan. Will you not then, my Brethren, join your united Forces, with our laborious tho' weak Endeavours, to promote your spiritual and eternal Happiness? Will you not submit to our Ministry, hear our Counsels, receive our Instructions, and regard our Persons, as the Ministers of Jesus, as your Pastors, your Friends, and your Benefactors in the Lord? And as the Apostle directs, in the Verse following my Text, *Pray for us*; pray for our Success in the Gospel. Those Sermons which are the Fruit of the Peoples Prayers, as well as the Pastor's Study, are most likely to be successful. *Pray for us, that we may be found faithful Stewards, and may do our Work now, and give in our Accounts at last, with Joy and not with Grief, for that is unprofitable to you, as well as to us.* And hoping you will do these Things, and more than I can now crave of you; I conclude all with the Apostle's Prayer, in the Verses following my Text, *Ver. 20, 21. Now the God of Peace that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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